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ABSTRACT

This packet presents educational materials to help teachers, students, and parents understand homelessness. Section 1, "America's Homeless Children: Educational Information for Students, Teachers, and Parents," discusses what it is like to be homeless, how many children are homeless, how homelessness is harmful, how children become homeless, and how to help homeless families. Section 2, "What You Can Do To Help Homeless Children and Families: Ideas for Kids, Classrooms, and Schools," presents individual and school activities. Section 3, "America's Homeless Children: Issues Before Congress," examines what Congress is currently examining and doing. Section 4, "Ben's Guide to U.S. Government for Kids: The Legislative Branch," and Section 5, "Ben's Guide to U.S. Government for Kids: How Laws Are Made," explain components and procedures of the U.S. government. Section 6, "Selected Resources for Students, Teachers, and Parents," lists resources on homelessness, community service, social activism, and the U.S. government and the legislative process. Section 7, "Classroom Activities on Homelessness," presents activities that help students: explore what home means to them; explore myths and stereotypes about homelessness; examine homelessness and poverty through novels; talk with homeless people; create kids care kits for homeless people; and write letters to public officials. (SM)

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Forget Me Not, 2000

Help Homeless Kids Blossom: Kids' Day on Capitol Hill

Educational Materials

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- America's Homeless Children: Educational Information for Students, Teachers, and Parents
- What You Can Do to Help Homeless Children & Families: Ideas for Kids, Classrooms, and Schools
- America's Homeless Children: Issues Before Congress
- Ben's Guide to U.S. Government for Kids: The Legislative Branch
- Ben's Guide to U.S. Government for Kids: How Laws Are Made
- Selected Resources for Students, Teachers, and Parents
- Classroom Activities on Homelessness

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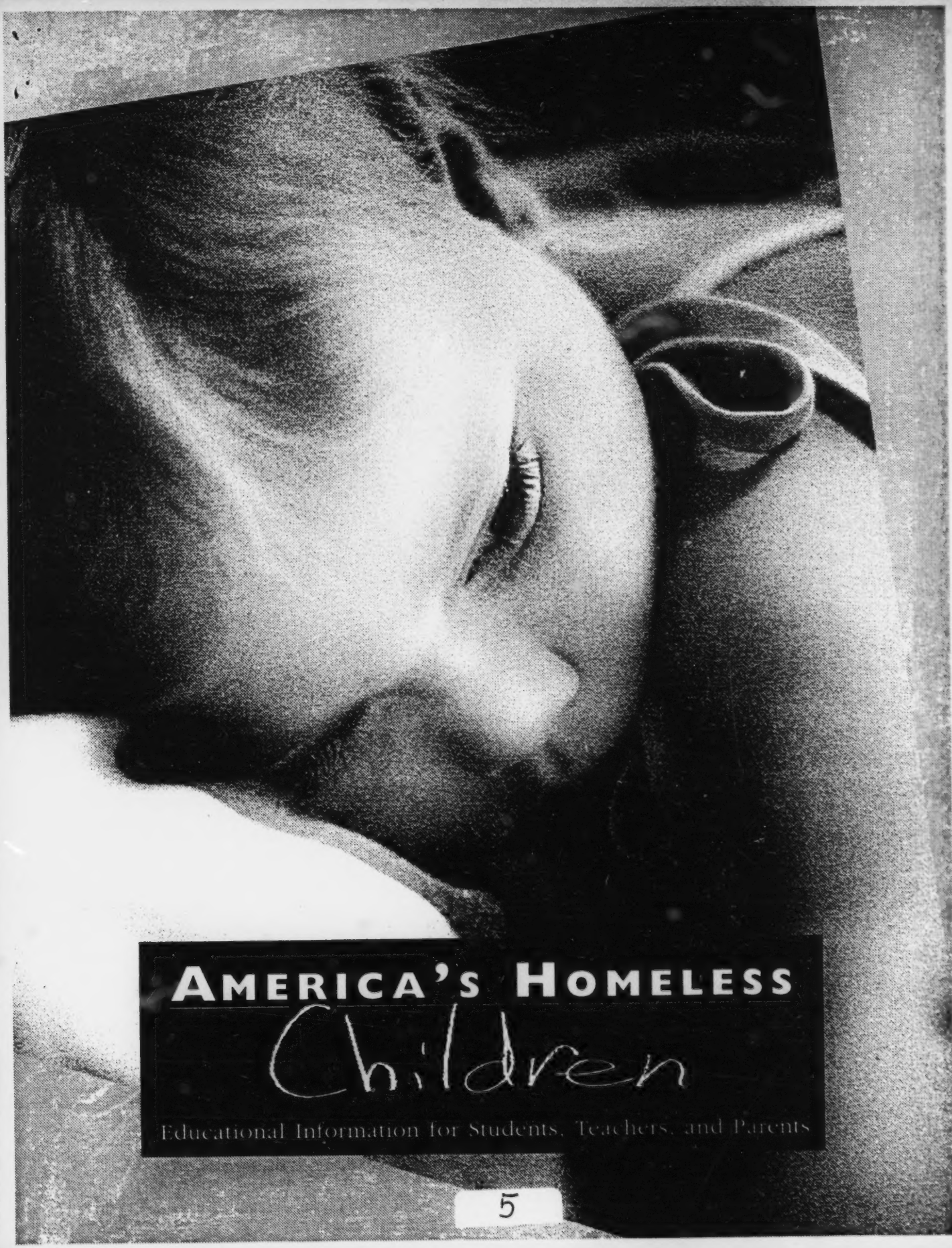

AMERICA'S HOMELESS Children

Educational Information for Students, Teachers, and Parents

What It's Like To Be Homeless

Homeless children worry they will never have a place to live. They don't know where they will sleep at night. They worry about what will happen to their parents. They do not have regular meals or medical care. They may see violence within their families, and are exposed more often to abuse. Many are suddenly separated from their families to be put in foster care or sent to live with a relative.

A homeless shelter can be a scary place for a child. Despite the dedication of people who work at shelters, many shelters are noisy, too hot or too cold, crowded, and lack any comforts. Children sleep in the same room with their parents, and sometimes in the same room with people they do not know. Bathrooms must be shared. There may be no place for children to play. In many shelters, children must follow rules with fixed mealtimes and strict behavior. It is sometimes hard to go to school when living in a shelter.

Shelters are usually designed to provide only a few weeks of emergency housing. But as family homelessness increases, more and more shelters are forced to provide long-term housing for families with no place else to go.

Many homeless families do not have the chance to live in a shelter because there are none where they live, local shelters are full or they don't qualify for help. These families are forced to live in cars, campgrounds, or doubled up with friends and relatives. It is even harder for them to meet their basic needs.

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How Many Children Are Homeless?

For many reasons, it's hard to count the exact number of homeless people:

- Homelessness tends to be temporary. The number of homeless people is always changing as some people find housing while new people become homeless.
- Homeless people can be hard to find. Some homeless people stay in shelters, others sleep in cars, campgrounds, abandoned buildings or the streets.
- Different definitions of homelessness can mean fewer homeless people are counted, including children.

Still, it is possible to make a good estimate. Based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Urban Institute estimates that 1.35 million children are homeless during a year's time, representing 39% of the overall homeless population.

Homeless families live in cities, in suburbs, and in rural areas. The typical homeless family is a young mother and her two young children. Among these families, the Urban Institute estimates that:

- 43% are African American.
- 38% are White.
- 15% are Hispanic.
- About 4% are Native American and other races.

Homelessness Is Increasing

One way to measure homelessness is by counting the number of shelter beds:

- A count of shelter beds done by the Urban Institute in 182 U.S. cities found that the rate of homelessness tripled during the 1980s.
- A study of 11 communities and 4 states found that shelter capacity more than doubled between 1987 and 1997.
- The U.S. Conference of Mayors has reported an increase in emergency shelter requests in every year since 1985, with a 12% increase in 1999.

There are not enough shelter beds for everyone who needs them. In fact most shelters keep waiting lists. Therefore, the increase in homelessness is even greater than the increase in the number of shelter beds. The rising cost of housing

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and the decline of welfare benefits are likely to increase the number of families who become homeless in the months and years ahead.

How Is Homelessness Harmful to Children?

Homeless Children Get Sick More Often

Homeless children get sick four times as often as children in middle class families. They have:

- Twice as many ear infections.
- Four times as many asthma attacks.
- Five times more diarrhea and stomach problems.
- Six times as many speech problems.

Homeless children have more health problems because:

- They don't have doctors or clinics they can go to for regular check-ups or when they get sick.
- Families in shelters live very close together, making it easier to pass around germs.
- Losing a home and being homeless is extremely stressful, increasing the chance of illness.

Homeless children go hungry twice as often as other children. They miss meals because there isn't enough food for the whole family, or sometimes there is no food at all.

Homeless children also have many more mental health problems, such as anxiety, depression, or aggressive behavior. Despite this, less than one-third are receiving help for their emotional problems.

Homeless Children Have Problems In School

According to the U.S. Department of Education, at least one-fifth of homeless children do not go to school. Some schools don't allow homeless children to register without school and medical records. Some schools won't enroll children without a home address. For many homeless children:

- There is no transportation from shelters to school.
- Moving from one shelter to the next makes it hard to enroll in school.
- School and medical records can be misplaced or lost when families move around a lot.
- The daily work of finding food and shelter pushes schooling aside.

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America's Homeless Children

Homeless children who are able to attend school:

- ☆ Have many more problems learning in school.
- ☆ Repeat a grade twice as often as other children

Because homeless children must move so often, 41% go to two different schools within a single year, and 28% go to three schools or more.

Homelessness Hurts Families

Most homeless children live with their mothers. The constant stress of finding food and shelter causes many mothers to become sick and to have mental health problems. Mothers may also have been abused by a husband or boyfriend, which can have serious long-lasting effects.

Although most fathers are in touch with their homeless children, they do not usually live with them. Many of these fathers do not have steady jobs.

They may have physical or mental health problems, and may have problems with alcohol or drugs.

For most children, fears of being separated from their home or family are only the stuff of nightmares. This is not so for children who are homeless.

In fact, 22% of homeless children live apart from their immediate family at some point. As homeless children get older, they are more likely to be separated from their families.

Young People On Their Own

Some homeless children live without their parents or other adults to care for them. These young people may be homeless because of:

- Problems with parents or stepparents, or parental abuse.
- Family money problems caused by high rents, low wages, lack of health insurance, or loss of welfare benefits.
- Foster care, which can lead to homelessness.

Without their parents, homeless youth have a harder time getting shelter beds because many shelters do not allow young people without adult supervision.

They may be prevented from going to school by curfew laws or school rules about legal guardianship. Without the relative safety of shelters or schools, they are left to live a dangerous life on unfriendly streets.

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How Do Children Become Homeless?

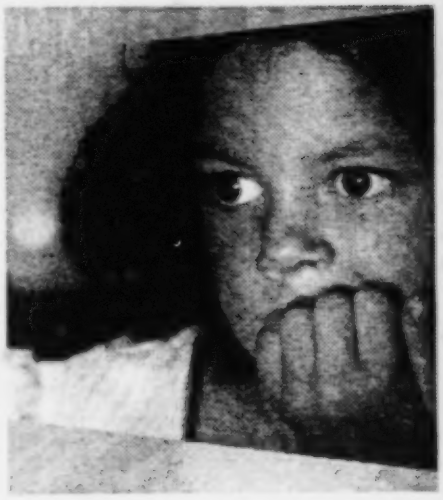
Most often, children become homeless because their parents do. There are many reasons why parents become homeless, but most important are the shortage of low-cost housing and the growing number of families living in poverty.

When there are more families than homes, finding a home is like a game of musical chairs: the music stops and someone is left standing because there are more players than chairs. In the housing game, the people left standing are those with the least money.

Shortage of Low-Cost Housing

The number of low-cost housing units in the U.S. has decreased during the last 30 years:

- Millions of low-cost units have been abandoned, or made into condominiums or more expensive apartments.
- "Single room occupancy" units—small apartments that used to provide more than a million low-cost homes in cities—have all but disappeared.
- Business and government are building fewer new lost-cost units.



As a result, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reports that there is a national shortage of 4.4 million low-cost units, the largest shortage on record. More families are asking for help, and they are waiting for it longer. The U.S. Conference of Mayors reports that:

- Requests for help have increased in 75% of the cities surveyed.
- Waiting periods for public housing average two years—almost three years for programs that help to pay a family's rent.

Children Are Falling Deeper Into Poverty

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that although the number of poor people in the U.S. has remained about the same in recent years (about 13% of the population), more children are living in extreme poverty. Because of important changes in the U.S. economy and in government

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policy toward poor families, children now account for 40% of poor people, almost twice as many as any other age group.

With the "global economy," the U.S. job base is changing from manufacturing jobs to service jobs. For example, shoes once made in the U.S. are now made in other countries, eliminating thousands of manufacturing jobs. At the same time, businesses such as fast food restaurants are creating new jobs that provide services rather than goods. Because service jobs tend to require less skill, they usually pay less. Such jobs have little security, and often do not offer benefits such as health care or sick pay or vacation time. A single mother earning minimum wage would have to work 86 hours a week to pay the rent of an average two-bedroom apartment.

Welfare benefits have been steadily reduced. For parents who can't find jobs or who are unable to work, welfare may be the only money they have to support their family. Current welfare benefits combined with Food Stamps still leave a family in poverty. The average welfare payment does not allow a family to afford a home. Due to lack of funding, only one family in four receives financial help for housing. Recent changes in welfare laws allow fewer families to receive benefits.

Race continues to limit how much money a family makes. According to the 1990 U.S. Census, the median income of White families was $36,915, compared to $21,423 for African American families. In addition, men earn more money than women. So, when race and gender are combined, the financial impact can be severe.

Because poverty and homelessness are closely linked, families are one of the fastest growing parts of the homeless population. Other key factors contribute to family homelessness:

- The high cost of medical care can wipe out a family's income when someone is injured or seriously ill. More than one-third of all poor people do not have health care insurance.
- Many mothers and children become homeless when they are forced to flee their homes to escape domestic violence.
- Problems with drugs or alcohol cause some families to become homeless.

Helping Homeless Families

Homeless children have a lot of courage. Everyday they try to overcome the fear and sadness of losing their homes. Homeless mothers love their children. They are committed to holding their families together through the troubles of homelessness. The strength of homeless families should inspire us all to help in any way we can.

Programs That Help

Across the nation, thousands of dedicated people work to help homeless people. The Urban Institute estimates that about 40,000 local programs help in some way, including:

- Housing assistance and vouchers.
- Transitional housing.
- Emergency shelters.
- Job training and employment.
- Food pantries and soup kitchens.
- Health care services.

Half of these programs serve homeless people in cities, a third serve rural areas, and the rest serve suburbs. Most help for homeless families is offered by community programs and non-profit agencies, with government providing less than one-sixth of these services.

The McKinney Act

At the federal level, most support for homeless people is provided by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. Created in 198[illegible], this important legislation funds emergency aid for:

- Food and shelter.
- Health care.
- Public schools.

Although the McKinney Act has been very successful helping homeless people, some of its programs have been reduced or eliminated over the years. Even with full funding, however, the McKinney Act cannot end family homelessness.

Temporary emergency services alone will not solve the problem of homelessness. The end to family homelessness can come only when everyone in America has the opportunity for:

- A steady job that pays a living wage.
- Basic work benefits such as health care, sick pay, and vacation time.
- Affordable housing that is decent and secure.
- Reliable public assistance for those who cannot work.

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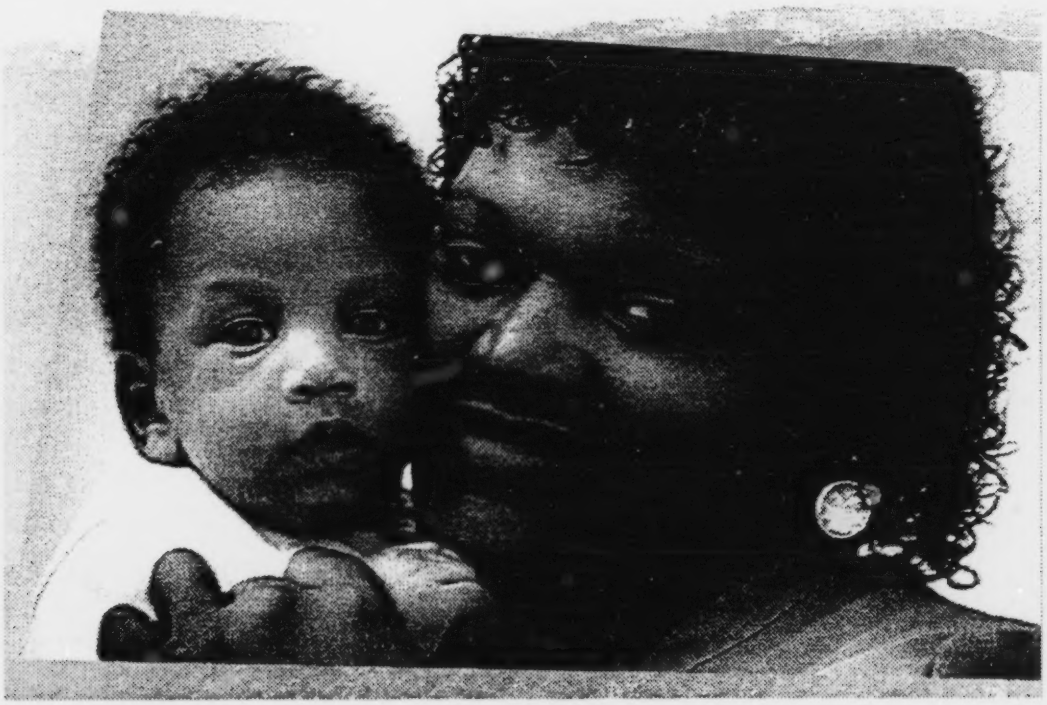
America's Homeless Children

Ending family homelessness will require an historic commitment from our entire country to live up to its vision of liberty and justice for all. For the more than one million children in America who are homeless, our national goal should be no less than to ensure a safe and decent home for every child in America.



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What You Can Do To Help Homeless Children & Families

Ideas for Kids, Classrooms, and Schools

There are many ways to help homeless children and families. You can do some things by yourself and others along with your friends, classmates, and school.

A few important things to remember as you get involved:

1. Be sure to involve your parents and teachers in anything you do.
2. If you decide to donate goods or help out at a homeless shelter, it is important to speak with people at the shelter first to see what would be most helpful. It is important to design your efforts around the particular needs of the shelter you will be helping.
3. Shelters, food pantries and soup kitchens often receive a lot of help during the holidays. This assistance is very useful, but these groups need help all year long, so consider volunteering at less popular times.
4. It is really hard to be homeless. Some kids and families are embarrassed about having to live in a shelter and don't want others to know. Please be sensitive to their feelings and respect their need for privacy about their situation.

Many schools in Louisiana build model houses and place them in halls and cafeterias to collect specific items for homeless families. One month these "Houses of Hope" might collect soap, shampoo, and toothpaste. The next month might focus on pennies or holiday gifts. Each house is opened at the end of the month and the collection is shared with homeless families.

Individual Activities

- *Learn More:* The Resource List in this packet offers books, web sites, and videos to help you learn more about homelessness.
- *Talk to Your Parents and Friends:* Talk to your family and friends about homelessness. Talk to them about what you all can do to help.
- *Volunteer:* Work in a neighborhood food pantry, soup kitchen, or clothing bank after school or on weekends.
- *Tutor a Homeless Child:* Help a younger child improve in math or reading or science.
- *Cook A Meal:* Make dinner for a homeless family and take it to a local shelter.
- *Share Your Toys:* Bring some of your toys to a shelter and spend an afternoon sharing them with homeless children. Leave the toys at the shelter when you go home.
- *Write Letters to Homeless Children:* Write letters to homeless children telling them that you are thinking of them and wishing them the best. Make hand-made birthday cards to be given to homeless kids on their birthday.
- *Be a Big Buddy/Make a Friend:* Plan a regular time when you can go to a shelter and do activities with children—play games, make crafts, etc.
- *Write Your Newspaper:* Write a letter or article for your local or school newspaper about homelessness and what you think should be done about it.
- *Inform Your Elected Officials:* Write or meet with elected officials (mayor, city council person, state representative/senator, U.S. representative/senator) and tell them that you care about homelessness and ask them what they are doing to help.
- *"Adopt" A Family:* Contact a local shelter and ask if you and your family can provide holiday gifts or a household "starter kit" to a homeless family or a family about to move into transitional or permanent housing.
- *Involve Others:* Once you decide on something to do, involve your family, friends and classmates in your efforts.

What You Can Do To Help Homeless Children & Families

Ideas for Kids, Classrooms, and Schools

In an Oregon elementary school, each grade did something different to help homeless families:

- One class made ceramic bowls, then sponsored a breakfast for parents who made a donation for the meal and took the bowl home with them. The money raised from the breakfast was then donated to a shelter.
- The 5th grade made a playhouse for the shelter's play area.
- Another class made bird feeders for the shelter that homeless families took with them when they found permanent housing.

These gifts were presented to the shelter at a ceremony at the school. Families added to the occasion by donating several truckloads of furniture, toys, bicycles, etc.

In Michigan, students and church youth groups work together to collect new backpacks, school supplies, new and used books, and new winter hats and gloves for donation to local shelters. Some students collect money that is used to buy store gift certificates for clothing and shoes.

The Maryland Department of Education requires that all high school students complete 75 hours of service-learning before graduating.

Service-learning projects can be performed in the classroom (giving a speech about homelessness), on a school wide basis (holding a fundraiser), or outside of school (volunteering at a homeless shelter).

School Activities

- *Inform Your Class:* Make your next class presentation or report about homeless children or families. Ask your teacher if a homeless person or someone who works in a shelter or local homeless coalition could come speak to your class.
- *Organize An Activity:* Enlist your classmates in group activities such as collecting used clothing, food, or toys—then bring them to a homeless shelter.
- *Raise Some Money:* Raise some money with a car wash, a pancake breakfast, or a craft fair—then donate it to a local shelter or food pantry.
- *Host A Party:* Host a party for kids in a shelter. Bring food and games to be shared by all.
- *Adopt A Shelter:* Ask your school to adopt a local shelter to ensure regular donations of clothing, food, toys, and money.
- *Create A Service-Learning Program:* Explore the possibility of your school establishing a program that allows students to receive recognition or credit for community service activities.

In North Carolina, students help homeless families by:

- Taping stories for homeless children to be played on tape recorders donated to shelters.
- Collecting new and gently used toys to be given out to homeless children at Christmas.
- Holding one big birthday party to celebrate the birthdays of all the children at a shelter.

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America's Homeless Children: Issues Before Congress
May 2000

Homeless families and children have many needs. They need a safe place to sleep, food to eat, clothes to wear, and medical care. Homeless parents need help finding jobs; getting to those jobs; and child care while they work. Homeless children also need help to go to school and succeed.

Congress has tried to help homeless families by making laws and programs. Some programs prevent people from becoming homeless. Housing, job training, and health care are examples of those kinds of programs. Other programs help people who have already become homeless meet their emergency needs, such as food and shelter. Most of the programs for homeless people were created by "The McKinney Act," which was passed by Congress in 1987. The federal government has different departments that are in charge of these programs.

Let's look at some of the programs Congress created to help homeless people:

Housing Programs: The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, also called HUD, tries to make sure people have a place to live. Many people, including homeless families, have a hard time paying for housing. Congress gives money to housing programs to help these people by paying a part of their rent. Those programs, known as "Section 8" and "Public Housing," make it possible for families to only have to pay 30% of their income for housing. Both programs have long waiting lists in many communities.

Homeless Assistance Programs: Congress also gives money to HUD for programs that provide housing and extra help to homeless people with special needs, like a drug or alcohol problem, or mental illness.

Emergency Food and Shelter Program: The Federal Emergency Management Agency, also called FEMA, gets money from Congress to give to programs that run soup kitchens, food banks and emergency shelters. These programs try to make sure everyone at least has a place to stay and food to eat while they get back on their feet.

Health Care for the Homeless Program: The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, also called HHS, gets money from Congress to give to organizations that help homeless people when they are sick, or help them stay healthy.

Runaway and Homeless Youth Program: Congress also gives money to HHS for programs that work with homeless and runaway teens. These programs may help homeless teens with a place to live, someone to help work out their problems, or help getting a job.

Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program: Congress gives money to the U. S. Department of Education to give to each state to help homeless students get into school and do well in school.

THE BUDGET

This chart shows how much money Congress is spending for some of these programs and how much the President says the programs should get this next year.

Federal Program	Current Funding 2000	President Clinton's Recommendations for 2001
Housing Programs	$346 million (new Section 8 vouchers) $6.04 billion (public housing operating and capital funds)	$690 million (new Section 8 vouchers) $6.15 billion (public housing operating and capitol funds)
HUD Homeless Assistance	$1.02 billion	$1.2 billion
Emergency Food and Shelter	$110 million	$140 million
Health Care for the Homeless	$88 million	$92 million
Runaway and Homeless Youth	$79 million	$89 million
Education of Homeless Children and Youth	$28.8 million	$31.7 million

How Congress Makes a Budget

Each federal department makes decisions about how its programs should work. They consider how many people might need help, what kind of help is needed, what the government's job should be, and who should run the programs in different parts of the country.

These federal departments report to Congress. Congress has special groups that deal with money, called "Appropriations Committees." Those committees look at how

much money the government has and what the needs of people are, and then they try to set a budget for each program.

Each year the Appropriations Committees meet to plan the federal budget. They look at all the issues and listen to experts that know how these programs run. They also listen to people who use the programs, and to voters who have ideas about the programs. These committees make their decisions and then they send their ideas to the whole Senate and House.

The House and Senate vote on each department's budget plan. Sometimes the House and Senate do not agree. Then they have to work out their problems in a special committee, and then send their final plan to the President. The President may say "yes" or "no." If the President says yes, the budget becomes law. If the answer is no, then Congress has to figure out something else and try again.

What's Happening Now? The House Appropriations Committee might vote on legislation in June. The Senate Appropriations Committee usually votes after the House. The final decisions must be made by September 31, 2000.

A Closer Look: The Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program

The Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program is one small program that helps homeless children get into and do well in school. It is the only federal program just for homeless children and youth. Like other homeless programs, the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program is part of the McKinney Act.

Each state gets money to be used by schools to help homeless children. The schools can decide how they are going to best use that money. Their main job is to make sure homeless children get into and do well in school. They may help by getting tutors for homeless children that need help with school work. They also can help pay for buses or other ways that make it easier for children to get to and from school. If homeless children need school supplies or school clothes, they can use money for that, too.

The McKinney Act does more than just give money to schools. It contains rules about how all schools should treat homeless children and youth. For example, homeless children have the right to go to the same school they were going to before they became homeless, or they can go to the school near where they are living.

Every five years, Congress takes a special look at those rules and tries to make them better. That is called "reauthorization." Congress is working on the reauthorization of the McKinney Education for Homeless Children and Youth program right now.

Congress is considering these questions:

- Should schools let homeless students in right away, even if they don't have all of the necessary paperwork (school and medical records)?

- What if a school doesn't let homeless students go there, or if it tries to send the homeless family to another school that the family doesn't want to go to?
- Should homeless children get to stay in their old school if their parents think it is the best for them and it is not too far away?
- Should there be a person in every school district to help homeless children and youth go to school?
- Should all school districts put up signs where homeless families can see them to tell them about their rights to go to school?
- Should some states get to not follow the federal laws that protect homeless children in schools?
- Should those states get to use their federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth money for other things that may not help homeless children?
- How much money should the federal government spend on the Education for Homeless Children and Youth program?

What's Happening Now? The House made its decision about McKinney Education for Homeless Children and Youth program by passing a bill called "The Students Results Act," also known as HR 2. The Senate is working on its plan now. It is called, "The Educational Opportunities Act," or S 2. When the Senate passes its bill, it will work with the House to make both bills the same. If the House and Senate agree, they will send it to the President to sign. If the President signs it, it becomes law.

How Does Congress Know What to Think? The U. S. Department of Education reports to Congress about how the Education for Homeless Children and Youth program is doing all across they country. Congress also hears from people from back home who care about how the program works. Even homeless people can tell Congress what they think. Congress people also have local offices and staff who look into these kinds of programs. Congress uses all of this information to help it make a decision.

For more information on these and other homelessness programs, please visit the National Coalition for Homeless web site at http://nch.ari.net, or call 202.737.6444.

May 5, 2000

Ben's Guide to U.S. Government

The Legislative Branch

The legislative branch of government has the authority to make laws for the nation. It was established in Article I of the Constitution with the creation of Congress. Agencies such as the Government Printing Office, Library of Congress, Congressional Budget Office, and the General Accounting Office, that provide support services for the Congress are also part of the legislative branch.

LEGISLATIVE

CONGRESS

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
SENATE

AGENCIES

Architect of the Capitol
Congressional Budget Office
General Accounting Office
Government Printing Office
Library of Congress

Congress is bicameral, that is, it is made up of two chambers, the Senate and the House of Representatives. This system was created by the Founding Fathers after much debate. Delegates to the Constitutional Convention from larger and more populated states wanted congressional representation to be based upon population. Fearing domination, delegates from smaller states wanted equal representation. The Great Compromise resulted in the creation of two houses, with representation based on population in one and with equal representation in the other.

Now members of Congress are elected by a direct vote of the people of the state they represent. It has not always been this way for the Senate. Prior to 1913 and the 17th Amendment to the Constitution, Senators were chosen by their state legislatures. The Senate was viewed as representative of state governments, not of the people. It was the responsibility of Senators to ensure that their state was treated equally in legislation.

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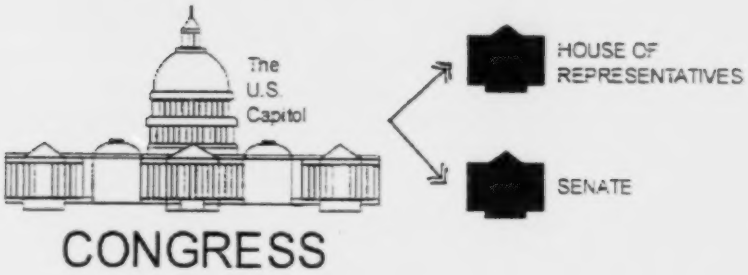
Ben's Guide to U.S. Government

The U.S. Congress



The primary duty of Congress is to write, debate, and pass bills, which are then passed on to the president for approval.

The Constitution grants Congress "all legislative powers" in the national government. Article I, Section 8, of the Constitution lists a wide range of congressional powers, including:

- Coining money.
- Maintaining a military.
- Declaring war on other countries.
- Regulating interstate and foreign commerce.

Congress also controls federal taxing and spending policies—one of the most important sources of power in the government. The Constitution also gives Congress the authority to "make all laws which shall be necessary and proper," an implied source of power sometimes called the Elastic Clause.

One of the most important implied powers is Congress's authority to investigate and oversee the executive branch and its agencies, such as the Department of Defense and the Department of Justice. Congress also holds hearings on matters of general public concern. Sometimes members of Congress conduct these hearings to identify problems that create a need for new laws. In other cases Congress holds hearings to raise public awareness about an issue.

There are, however, some congressional powers that are rarely used such as the ability to impeach an official and amending the Constitution.

In addition to the power described above, Congress shares powers with the president in matters such as, framing U.S. foreign policy and control over the military. For example, while the president negotiates treaties, they are only put into effect once the Senate approves them. Also, while Congress can declare war and approve funds for the military, the president is the commander-in-chief of the military.

A new Congress begins in January every two years following congressional elections, in which voters choose all representatives and a third of the senators. The entire House membership faces re-election every two years, but the Senate is a continuing body because there is never an entirely new Senate. Since the First Congress, which met from 1789 to 1791, all Congresses have been numbered in order. We are currently in the 106th Congress. Congress meets once every year. Usually the session lasts from January 3rd to July 31st, but it can last much longer.

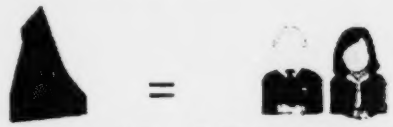
For the most part, the House and Senate each meet in their respective chamber in the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. However, on rare occasions, they will meet together for a joint session of Congress in the House chamber. For example, a joint session will be called to count electoral votes for presidential elections.

Ben's Guide to U.S. Government

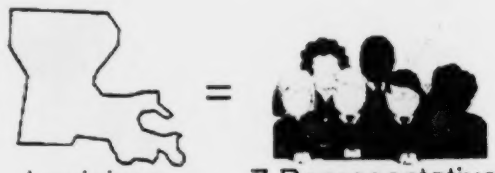
The House of Representatives

When the Constitution was being drafted, a debate broke out between states with large populations and those with smaller populations. Each had a different opinion about how the states should be represented in the new government. To be fair to each group, a compromise was reached. By dividing Congress into two houses, the House of Representatives would favor states with larger populations, while the Senate would favor those states with smaller populations.

There are a total of 435 members in the House of Representatives. Each member represents an area of a state, known as a congressional district. The number of representatives is based on the number of districts in a state. Each state is guaranteed one seat. Every ten years, the U.S. Census Bureau counts the population of the states to determine what number of districts should be in each state.



New Hampshire 2 Representatives



Louisiana 7 Representatives

Representatives, elected for two-year terms, must be 25 years old, a citizen for at least seven years, and a resident of the state from which they are elected. Five additional members—from Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Virgin Islands, and the District of Columbia—represent their constituencies in the House. While they may participate in the debates, they cannot vote.

The House has special jobs that only it can perform. It can:

- Start laws that make people pay taxes.
- Decide if a government official should be put on trial before the Senate if s/he commits a crime against the country. This is known as impeachment.

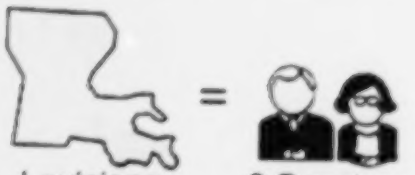
A service of the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office.

Ben's Guide to U.S. Government

The Senate

There are a total of 100 members in the Senate. The Constitution states that the vice president has formal control over the Senate and is known as the president of the Senate. The vice president is only present for important ceremonies and to cast a tie-breaking vote.

Senators, elected for six-year terms, must be 30 years old, a citizen for at least nine years, and a resident of the state from which they are elected.

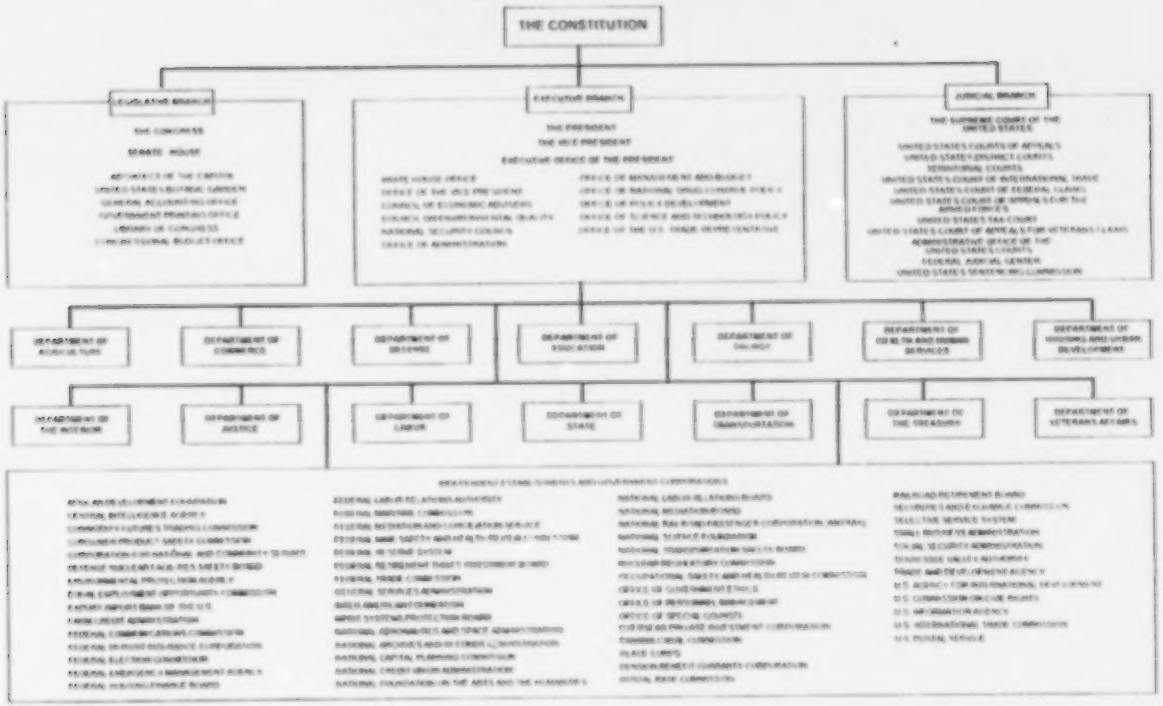


As in the House, the Senate also has special jobs that only it can peform. It can:

- Say yes or no to any treaties the president makes.
- Say yes or no to any people the president recommends for jobs, such as cabinet officers, Supreme Court justices, and ambassadors.
- Can hold a trial for a government official who commits a crime against the country.

A service of the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office.

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES



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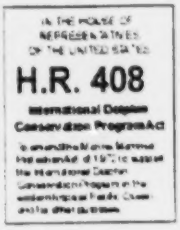
Ben's Guide to U.S. Government

How Laws Are Made

Laws may be initiated in either chamber of Congress, the House of Representatives or the Senate. For this example, we will track a bill introduced in the House of Representatives. For more information, try *How Our Laws Are Made* (Senate Document 105-14).

1. When a Representative has an idea for a new law, s/he becomes the sponsor of that bill and introduces it by giving it to the clerk of the House or by placing it in a box, called the hopper. The clerk assigns a legislative number to the bill, with H.R. for bills introduced in the House and S. for bills introduced in the Senate. The Government Printing Office (GPO) then prints the bill and distributes copies to each representative.


IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES

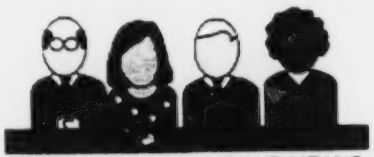
H.R. 408

International Dolphin Conservation Program Act

Let's track the bill history of the International Dolphin Conservation Act.

2. Next, the bill is assigned to a committee (the House has 22 standing committees, each with jurisdiction over bills in certain areas) by the Speaker of the House so that it can be studied.

The standing committee (or often a subcommittee) studies the bill and hears testimony from experts and people interested in the bill. The committee then may release the bill with a recommendation to pass it, or revise the bill and release it, or lay it aside so that the House cannot vote on it. Releasing the bill is called reporting it out, while laying it aside is called tabling.


COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

3. If the bill is released, it then goes on a calendar (a list of bills awaiting action). Here the House Rules Committee may call for the bill to be voted on quickly, limit the debate, or limit or prohibit amendments. Undisputed bills may be passed by unanimous consent, or by a two-thirds vote if members agree to suspend the rules.

4. The bill now goes to the floor of the House for consideration and begins with a complete reading of the bill (sometimes this is the only complete reading). A third reading (title only) occurs after any amendments have been added. If the bill passes by simple majority (281 of 435), the bill moves to the Senate.

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5. In order to be introduced in the Senate, a senator must be recognized as the presiding officer and announce the introduction of the bill. Sometimes, when a bill has passed in one house, it becomes known as an act; however, this term usually means a bill that has been passed by both houses and becomes law.

6. Just as in the House, the bill then is assigned to a committee. It is assigned to one of the Senate's 16 standing committees by the presiding officer. The Senate committee studies and either releases or tables the bill just like the House standing committee.

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

7. Once released, the bill goes to the Senate floor for consideration. Bills are voted on in the Senate based on the order they come from the committee; however, an urgent bill may be pushed ahead by leaders of the majority party. When the Senate considers the bill, they can vote on it indefinitely. When there is no more debate, the bill is voted on. A simple majority (51 of 100) passes the bill.

8. The bill now moves onto a conference committee, which is made up of members from each House. The committee works out any differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill. The revised bill is sent back to both houses for their final approval. Once approved, the bill is printed by the Government Printing Office (GPO) in a process called enrolling. The clerk from the introducing house certifies the final version.

Public Law 105-42

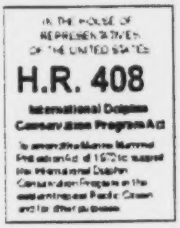
International Dolphin Conservation Program Act

9. The enrolled bill is now signed by the Speaker of the House and then the vice president. Finally, it is sent for presidential consideration. The president has ten days to sign or veto the enrolled bill. If the president vetoes the bill, it can still become a law if two-thirds of the Senate and two-thirds of the House then vote in favor of the bill.

Ben's Guide to U.S. Government

Tracking Legislation

Now that you have learned the steps a bill takes to become a law, let's show how that model works with a real bill. In addition, you'll learn where this information is available on *GPO Access*, the Government Printing Office's online service of official legislative and regulatory materials.

Tracking the legislative history of H.R. 408, The International Dolphin Conservation Program Act	**Where to find this information on *GPO Access***
The first step in H.R. 408's journey was its introduction to Congress. The number H.R. 408 indicates that the bill was introduced in the House of Representatives.  IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES **H.R. 408** International Dolphin Conservation Program Act On January 9, 1997, the bill was introduced by its sponsor (Rep. Wayne Gilchrest of Maryland) and recorded in the *Congressional Record*. At this point, the **Introduced Version** (the very first version) of the bill was published by the Government Printing Office (GPO).	Read when H.R. 408 was introduced in the *Congressional Record* database. Read the Introduced Version in the *Congressional Bills* database.

Next, H.R. 408 was assigned to the House Ways and Means Committee for closer analysis. After debating the bill, the committee released the **Reported Version** of the bill, and referred the bill to the House floor. COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS	Read the Reported Version in the *Congressional Bills* database. Read the reports on H.R. 408 in the *Congressional Reports* database.

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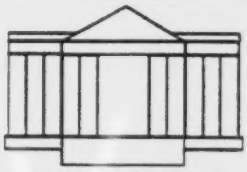
Once released, H.R. 408 went on the House Calendar. The full House debated H.R. 408 and on May 21, 1997 voted in its favor. 262 voted yea, 166 voted nay, and 6 did note vote.



FULL HOUSE

View H.R. 408 on the calendar in the *House Calendars* database. Not available at this time.

Read the debate and see the vote of H.R. 408 in the *Congressional Record* database.

Finally, the House released the **Engrossed Version** of the bill. At this point, the bill officially became known as an **Act**.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES

H.R. 408

International Dolphin Conservation Program Act

Read the Engrossed Version in the *Congressional Bills* database.

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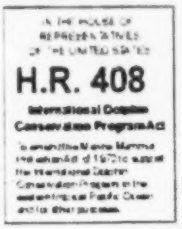
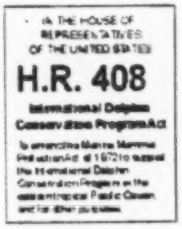
Ben's Guide to U.S. Government

Tracking Legislation

Tracking the legislative history of H.R. 408, The International Dolphin Conservation Program Act	Where to find this information on *GPO Access*
H.R. 408 then arrived at the Senate. A new version, the **Referred-To-The-Senate Version**, was published. 	Read the Referred-to the-Senate version in the *Congressional Bills* database.
H.R. 408 then went to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Technology. They edited the bill, substituting the text of their own bill, S.39, for much of H.R. 408's text. They then sent the new H.R. 408 to the Senate floor. COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION	Since this step was not published, it will not be found on *GPO Access*.
A new version of H.R. 408 was published: the **Engrossed-With Senate Version**. It now had to be signed by both chambers and given to the President. 	Read the Engrossed-with Senate version in the *Congressional Bills* database.

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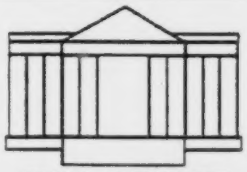
The Senate told the House about the changes they made. After obtaining the House's approval, the Senate passed the bill.	 FULL SENATE	Since this step was not published, it will not be found on *GPO Access*.

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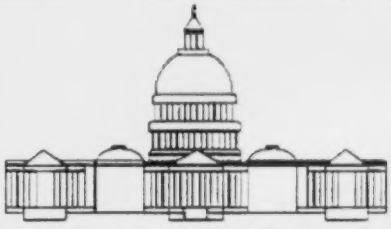
Ben's Guide to U.S. Government

Tracking Legislation

Page 3 of 3

Tracking the legislative history of H.R. 408, The International Dolphin Conservation Program Act		Where to find this information on *GPO Access*
Both chambers signed H.R. 408 and published a new version, the **Enrolled Version**.		Read the Enrolled Verion in the *Congressional Bills* database.
H.R. 408 was then passed to the President. He reviewed it and signed it into law.	PRESIDENT	Read the President's remarks in the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*database.
H.R. 408 then became know as **Public Law** 105-42. It had completed its journey and become an official law of the United States.	**Public Law 105-42** International Dolphin Conservation Program Act	Read the final version of the bill in the *Public Laws* database. Trace all the H.R. 408's steps in the *History of Bills* database.

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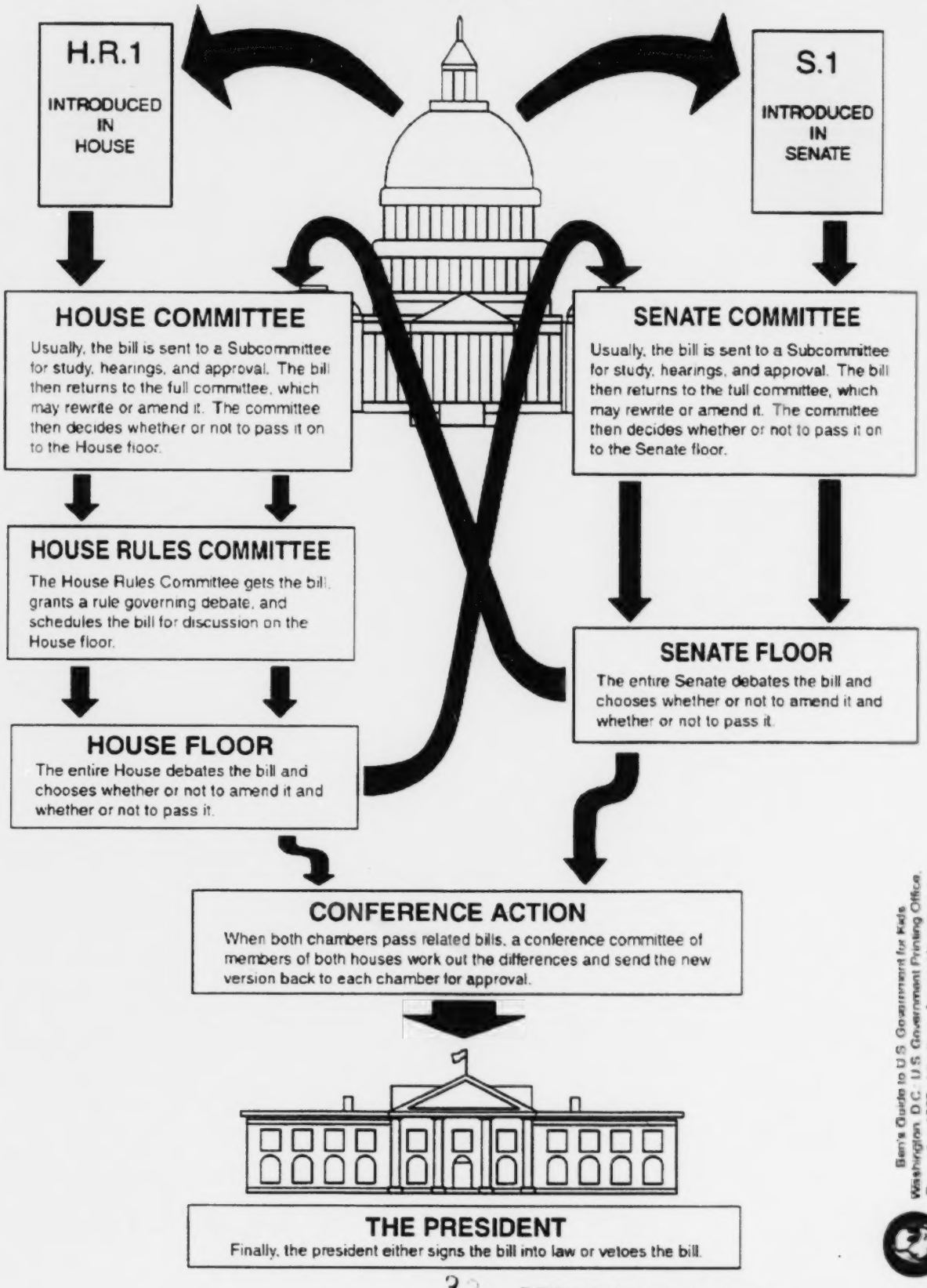
THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS


H.R.1
INTRODUCED IN HOUSE
S.1
INTRODUCED IN SENATE
HOUSE COMMITTEE
Usually, the bill is sent to a Subcommittee for study, hearings, and approval. The bill then returns to the full committee, which may rewrite or amend it. The committee then decides whether or not to pass it on to the House floor.
SENATE COMMITTEE
Usually, the bill is sent to a Subcommittee for study, hearings, and approval. The bill then returns to the full committee, which may rewrite or amend it. The committee then decides whether or not to pass it on to the Senate floor.
HOUSE RULES COMMITTEE
The House Rules Committee gets the bill, grants a rule governing debate, and schedules the bill for discussion on the House floor.
SENATE FLOOR
The entire Senate debates the bill and chooses whether or not to amend it and whether or not to pass it.
HOUSE FLOOR
The entire House debates the bill and chooses whether or not to amend it and whether or not to pass it.
CONFERENCE ACTION
When both chambers pass related bills, a conference committee of members of both houses work out the differences and send the new version back to each chamber for approval.
THE PRESIDENT
Finally, the president either signs the bill into law or vetoes the bill.

Ben's Guide to U.S. Government for Kids
Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office,
December 1999 <http://www.benguide.gpo.gov>

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Selected Resources for Students, Teachers and Parents

Homelessness

Books

Fly Away Home
Eve Bunting
Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991

This children's picture book is about a homeless boy who lives in an airport with his father, moving from terminal to terminal, trying not to be noticed. He is given hope when he sees a trapped bird, in the airport terminal, find its freedom.

Homeless
Bernard Wolf
Orchard Books, 1995

This children's book with vivid, full-color photographs documents a family in New York City living in temporary housing while searching for permanent housing.

Homeless in America: How Could It Happen Here?
Information Plus, 1997

This informational handbook covers a broad range of topics including: who is homeless; causes of homelessness; poverty, income and employment; affordable housing; and responses to homelessness.

Homelessness
Sara Dixon Criswell
Lucent Books, 1998

This middle school level book covers topics including the causes of homelessness, life on the streets, the shelter system, homeless children and help for homeless people.

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I Can Hear the Sun
Patricia Polacco
Philomel Books, 1996

This children's picture book is about a homeless boy, Fondo, who believes that geese want him to fly away with him and his friend Stephanie Michelle.

No Place to Be: Voices of Homeless Children
Judith Berck
Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992

This book on family homelessness combines facts with the real life experiences of more than thirty homeless children living in shelters and welfare hotels. *No Place to Be* explains what it means to be deprived of the things that most take for granted such as school, space, privacy, control over one's life, nutrition, health care and safety.

On the Street Where You Live: Lesson Plans on Homelessness for Middle School Students
To order, contact The Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless, 122 West Franklin Avenue, Suite 5, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55404, 612- 870-7073.

On the Street Where You Live is a curriculum on homelessness for middle school students. The curriculum includes background information and myths about homelessness and a set of 9 lesson plans on: homelessness and some of its causes; the needs of homeless people and how we can help; how it feels to be homeless; comparing our wants and needs to those of homeless people; what does home mean to me; community service projects; resources; a directory of providers; and sections on youth and rural homelessness.

Where's Home?
Jonathan London
Penguin Books USA Inc., 1995

This grade-school novel is the story of Aaron and his father who endure tough times on the streets of California. While trying to find a real home for themselves, Aaron and his father spend time in a homeless shelter. Aaron is able to survive the troubles of finding a home by using his "million-dollar 'magination" and by meeting a new friend.

Organizations

The Better Homes Fund
181 Wells Avenue, 3rd Floor
Newton, MA 02459
617-964-3834
www.thebetterhomesfund.org

The Better Homes Fund is a national non-profit organization dedicated to developing long-term solutions to family homelessness. The mission of this organization is to translate research findings and field experience into state-of-the-art programs and policies benefiting poor and homeless families. Their web site includes research-based information on family homelessness, a list of their current programs and publications and an on-line store of products.

Homes for the Homeless/Institute for Children and Poverty
36 Cooper Square, 6th Floor
New York, NY 10003
212-529-5252
www2.homesforthehomeless.com/hfh/

Homes for the Homeless works at the local and national level to develop new solutions for combating homelessness and providing service-enriched transitional housing to homeless families. The Institute for Children and Poverty conducts research on strategies for fighting poverty and homelessness and disseminates this information which can be found on their web site. The web site also includes information on trainings, events, facts and books including, their first children's publication entitled "Our Wish," a story of a family of rabbits shaken by homelessness.

National Alliance to End Homelessness
1518 K Street, NW, Suite 206
Washington, DC 20005
202-638-1526
www.endhomelessness.org

The National Alliance to End Homelessness is a non-profit organization dedicated to ending homelessness by creating a powerful network of concerned individuals and organizations in order to advance practical, community-based solutions. Their web page contains information on programs, practices, legislation, publications and what individuals can do to end homelessness.

National Coalition for the Homeless
1012 Fourteenth Street, NW, #600
Washington, DC 20005-3410
202-737-6444
http://nch.ari.net

The National Coalition for the Homeless is a national advocacy network of homeless persons, activists, service providers, and others committed to ending homelessness through public education, policy advocacy, grassroots organizing, and technical assistance. Their web site includes facts about homelessness, an on-line library, directories of national, state and local homeless organizations, legislative alerts, current NCH projects, Internet resources and a listing of their publications.

The National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty
1411 K Street NW, Suite 1400
Washington, DC 20005
202-638-2535
www.nlchp.org

The mission of the Law Center is to advocate effectively to protect the rights of homeless people and to implement solutions to end homelessness in America. The Law Center focuses their efforts on impact litigation, policy advocacy, and public education. Their web site includes general information on homelessness, legal and civil rights of homeless persons, recent legislative developments and their on-line publication list and fact sheets.

State and Local Homeless Organizations

Most communities have service programs designed to help homeless families. These groups are good sources of information about the services that are available in your community and volunteer opportunities. In addition, all states have advocacy organizations dedicated to addressing homelessness at the state and local levels. These groups have information on homelessness, available services, current advocacy efforts, and volunteer opportunities. Check local phone books or The National Coalition for the Homeless web site (http://nch.ari.net) for groups in your area.

Videos

Don't Make Me Choose **(Color/Black & White video, 17 minutes)**
To order, contact Night Vision Productions, PO Box 97, South Windsor, CT 06074, 203- 289-7503. Each video is $20 plus $3 for shipping and handling. (S/H for 2-3 videos is $4; for 4-5 videos, $6)

Don't Make Me Choose is a mini-documentary and music video about the plight of homeless people. The documentary consists of interviews with men, women, and children who are, or have been, homeless. The underlying theme of the video is that change is possible.

I Want To Go Home - Homelessness in New Hampshire **(Black & White video, 20 min.) To order, contact Peter Braddock at Video Verite, P.O. Box 1579, Portsmouth, NH 03802 or at 603-436-3360.Each video is $25 which includes shipping and handling.**

This video explores what it is like for children and parents to be homeless. It places current-day photographs of destitute families alongside those of the photography masters to demonstrate that poor and homeless families of today are not much different than those of the Great Depression era. Photographers who worked with the homeless families share their perceptions and how they changed as a result of their experience.

Shelter Boy **(Color video, 15 minutes)**
Fox Network
To order, call or send a check to: Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless,122 West Franklin Ave, Room 5, Minneapolis, MN 55404, 612- 870-7073. Each video is $23 which includes shipping and handling.

Shelter Boy is a mini-documentary about a young boy whose family loses their home and ends up in an emergency shelter in California. The story shows what the boy must go through to attend school while living in a shelter. It also shows how he must deal with the stigma of being homeless and being called "shelter boy" by his classmates.

Shirley Mann's Story **(Color video, 10 minutes)**
To order, contact Paul Brindel, at The Shelter Project, Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County, 501 Soquel Ave., Suite E, Santa Cruz, CA 95062, 408-457-1741 ext. 160. Each video is $30 which includes shipping and handling.

This video focuses on Shirley Mann, a 61-year-old woman who has worked all her life and has recently been laid off and her benefits have run out. The first half of the video is an interview with Shirley talking about the un-imaginable process of becoming homeless after more than 40 years of employment and housing. The second half of the video finds Shirley ready to move into housing she can afford.

Why I am Homeless **(Color video, 9 minutes)**
To order, contact Paul Brindel, at The Shelter Project, Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County, 501 Soquel Ave., Suite E, Santa Cruz, CA 95062 or at (408) 457-1741 ext. 160. Each video is $30 which includes shipping and handling.

This video shows homeless men at an outdoor campground shelter in Santa Cruz, California telling their stories about how they came to be shelterless.

Community Service and Social Activism

Books

160 Ways to Help the World: Community Service Projects to Help the World
Linda Leeb Duper
Facts on File, Inc., 1996

This book shows you how to develop and implement fun, down-to-earth projects that make a difference both locally and globally. The book explains why community service is important and offers a comprehensive index and resource list of community-service publications and organizations.

54 Ways You Can Help the Homeless
Rabbi Charles A. Kroloff
Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, Inc. and Behrman House, Inc., 1993

This book offers practical suggestions on how to give aid to homeless people. Actions range from the nearly effortless and cost-free to those requiring committed community involvement.

Take a Stand! Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Government
Daniel Weizmann
Price Stern Sloan, 1996

A fun-to-read, interactive handbook that describes how the United States Government works and how young kids can get involved including grassroots activities, letter writing campaigns, mock elections and school elections. Take a Stand! also includes interesting facts, Internet addresses, Web sites and step-by-step guides on how to get involved in government.

The Kid's Guide to Service Projects
Barbara A. Lewis
Free Spirit Publishing, 1995

The Kid's Guide to Service Projects contains more than 500 service ideas for young people of all ages who want to make a difference. They range from simple to more complex projects in a variety of areas including homelessness; housing; community development and beautification; crime fighting, politics and government; literacy and much more.

The Kid's Guide to Social Action
Barbara A. Lewis
Free Spirit Publishing, Inc., 1998

A lively, practical civics book that focuses on how young students can solve social problems and how to turn creative thinking into positive action. A section of this book highlights how kids can initiate and make change in government on a national level while explaining the way in which the U.S. Government works.

The Kids' Volunteering Book
Arlene Erlbach
Lerner Publications Company, 1998

This book presents some opportunities for young people to perform volunteer services and highlights dozens of kids who have reached out in different ways. The Kids' Volunteering Book provides kids with ideas for their own projects and easy ways to start volunteering in their communities.

Organizations

Kids Care Clubs
www.kidscare.org

This group encourages the development of compassion and the spirit of charity in children through hands-on service projects. The web site offers guidance on how to start a Kids Care Club that gets kids involved in the philanthropic community.

Kids Voting USA
398 South Mill Avenue, Suite 304
Tempe, AZ 85281
480-921-3727
www.kidsvotingusa.org

Kids Voting USA is a non-profit, nonpartisan, grassroots organization founded to combat the crisis of low voter turnout in the United States. The organization teaches youth -- through a special curriculum, family participation and community involvement -- the importance of being informed and the responsibilities of voting. Their web site includes information on *Civics Alive!*, a comprehensive civics education curriculum for grades K-12 which consists of two pieces: *An Educator's Guide* and *The Activities*. A sample of this curriculum can be found on their web site.

U.S. Government and the Legislative Process

Books

2000 Congressional Workbook
The Children's Defense Fund
To order, call or e-mail Amy Judge at (202) 662-3576 or ajudge@childrensdefense.org
Each Congressional Workbook is $8.00. Shipping/handling is $3.00 for first item, $1.00 for each additional item.

The Workbook offers "basics" about the budget and appropriations process; the newest estimates on the federal budget surplus; how a bill becomes a law; the "basics" of key leading children's programs; the Committees and Subcommittees in the House and Senate that work on children's issues; how to contact your member on an issue; a directory of House and Senate members; key lists of House and Senate leadership; the Congressional schedule; a legislative glossary; and important web sites.

The Congress
Leslie Gourse
Franklin Watts, 1994

This grade school level book covers topics ranging from the founding of Congress to the structure and powers of Congress today. Presented in an easy-to-read manner, the book provides a thorough explanation of the way in which Congress works.

The U.S. Congress
Don Nardo
Lucent Book Inc., 1994

This middle school level book begins with a historical overview of Congress which is followed by a discussion of the organization, membership and duties of the congressional body.

Web Sites

Ben's Guide to U.S. Government for Kids
http://bensguide.gpo.gov

Ben's Guide to U.S. Government for Kids is a web site created by the U.S. Government Printing Office in order to provide an official, online source of legislative and regulatory information. The site is a learning tool for K-12 students (divided by grade level), parents and teachers on how our government works. The web site also includes an extensive list of U.S. Government Web sites for kids divided into various categories including arts and recreation; business and money; careers; environment; government and law; history; and science.

C-SPAN.org: Public Affairs on the Web
http://c-span.org

C-SPAN dedicates a section of their web site to current events of the 106th Congress and additionally, compiles a comprehensive congressional resource list. This list includes links to the U.S House and Senate, the congressional directory, issues and legislation, a step-by-step guide to the legislative process (http://congress.nw.dc.us/c-span/process.html), and tips on writing to Congress.

THOMAS--U.S. Congress on the Internet
http://thomas.loc.gov

THOMAS, a web site created by the Library of Congress in the spirit of Thomas Jefferson, offers information about the U.S. Congress and the legislative process. Bills, committee reports and the Congressional Record for the 104th, 105th and 106th Congresses can be accessed through this site.

United States Senate Web Site
www.senate.gov

The official United States Senate web site provides information on the history of the Senate, its powers and procedures, its legislative activities and its various committees. This page also provides a biographical directory of the United States Congress, on-line publications and contact information for the Senate.

United States House of Representatives Web Site
www.house.gov

The official United States House of Representatives web site includes both the weekly and annual congressional schedule, up-to-date events on the House floor, House committee hearing schedules and oversight plans and contact information for elected Members to the U.S. House of Representatives. You may also access information about bills and resolutions being considered in the Congress through this site.

Welcome to the White House Web Page
www.whitehouse.gov

Welcome to the White House is a comprehensive web site about the White House, including links to the President and Vice President, a White House history and tour, current events and activities, a virtual library and an interactive citizens' handbook. The site also includes a link to the White House For Kids which encourages young people to become more active and informed about the government.

For more information, please contact **The Better Homes Fund**, 181 Wells Avenue, 3rd Floor, Newton, MA 02459, 617-964-3834, 617-244-1758, http://thebetterhomesfund.org/ or **The National Coalition for the Homeless**, 1012 14th Street, NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20005, 202-737-6444, 202-737-6445, http://nch.ari.net

Classroom Activities on Homelessness

For more information, please contact:

The Better Homes Fund
181 Wells Avenue, 3rd Floor
Newton, MA 02459,
Phone: 617-964-3834
Fax: 617-244-1758
http://www.thebetterhomesfund.org

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Washington, DC 20005
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http://nch.ari.net

What Home Means To Me: Tile Mosaic Project

Time Needed
30 minutes preparation time; 1 hour for drawing tiles and designing display

Skill Areas
Art and Design

Objective
Students will think about and express what home means to them.

Materials
White, blank 4x4 cards (or ceramic tiles if your budget permits), permanent markers, other art supplies as necessary for the display.

Teacher Preparation
None

Activity
Give each student a tile and using markers have each student depict in words and drawings what HOME means to him/her. When the tiles are completed have your students design a display for the wall arranging the tiles in a mosaic pattern. Display the mosaic in a prominent place such as a hallway, library, cafeteria or showcase to share their concept of home with others.

Adapted from On the Street Where You Live: Lesson Plans on Homelessness for Middle School Students prepared by the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless, November 1998

Exploring Myths and Stereotypes About Homelessness

Time Needed
60 to 90 minutes

Skill Areas
Listening and Critical Thinking

Objective
Students will learn about homelessness by exploring myths and stereotypes, reviewing current facts, and watching a mini-documentary about a young boy whose family loses their home and ends up in an emergency shelter.

Materials
Chalkboard or overhead projector, VCR and television, fact sheets on homelessness from your state or local coalition for the homeless (check your local phone book or The National Coalition for the Homeless web site @ http://nch.ari.net) or from the library or Internet and a copy of the video *Shelter Boy* (if the video is not available at your school or local library contact the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless, 122 West Franklin Ave, Room 5, Minneapolis, MN 55404, 612-870-7073. Each video is $23 which includes shipping and handling).

Teacher Preparation
Read materials from your state or local coalition for the homeless and any current materials from the newspaper, library and Internet to become familiar with the issue of homelessness. See Forget Me Not 2000 Selected Resources for Students, Teachers, and Parents for a listing. Review the video.

Activity
Begin the session by asking students to raise their hands if they have ever seen a homeless person.

Then ask, "How did you know the person was homeless?" List answers on board. Responses should reveal the stereotypical homeless person: dirty, ragged clothes, sleeping in a box, carrying a sign, asking for money, etc.

Explain to students that they will watch a video that describes the experiences of a homeless boy. Ask them to keep in mind the question: What would you add or delete from the list, after seeing the video, that describes most homeless people?

After the video, review the list on the board and make the appropriate changes. Then ask:

*What are some of the reasons people are homeless? Mention losing a job, lack of affordable housing, lack of child support, low wages, cuts in social services, mental illness, physical illness, drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, etc.

*Where have you seen homeless people?

*How many people were homeless in your town/city/county in the previous year? Use the fact sheets from your state or local homeless coalition.

*What did you learn about homelessness that you did not know before?

*How have people helped in the past? What still needs to be done?

*How can we all help? Consult the Forget Me Not 2000 What You Can Do To Help Homeless Children and Families: Ideas for Kids, Classrooms, and Schools for ideas.

Adapted from the Adopt A Shelter Program Lesson Plan, Center for Poverty Solutions, Baltimore, MD.

Understanding Homelessness Through Poetry and Photographs

Time Needed
60 minutes

Skill Areas
Listening and Creative Writing

Objective
Students will learn about homelessness by listening to poetry and looking at photographs. Students will be asked to put themselves "in the shoes" of those in the pictures and asked to express in their own words what they (student and subject) feel.

Materials
Something Permanent by Cynthia Rylant; photos by Walker Evans, paper and pencils/pens.

Teacher Preparation
Review Something Permanent and select several poems and photos to show the class. Select additional photos for the writing exercise.

Activity
Read several poems to the class and show them the photos that evoked the words.

Discuss the poems and photos as a group.

Then show the students several other photos and ask them to put themselves in the picture and write from the point of view of someone who was in that situation. Students could also write a story/poem about the picture. Try first or third person point of view.

Adapted from suggestions provided by Linda Rief, middle school teacher and nationally known educator from Durham, New Hampshire.

Learning and Examining Homelessness and Poverty Through Novels

Time Needed
45-60 minutes daily for 2-3 weeks.

Skill Areas
Reading and Critical Thinking

Objective
Students will learn and examine homelessness and poverty through the depiction of these issues in novels.

Materials
Copies of one or more of the following books:

- The Great Gilly Hopkins by Katherine Paterson
- Ellen Foster by Kaye Gibbons
- Where The Heart Is by Billie Letts

Teacher Preparation
Read one or more of the above listed books. Select sections of each book to be read aloud to the class. Create questions for daily discussions of chapters.

Activity
Read a section/chapter of each book to be used aloud to the class as an introduction to each book.

Ask students to pick one of the books to read.

Assign nightly chapters to read and then convene daily discussions in different groups (based on book being read). Daily discussions could include asking students to read a passage that struck them in some way and then ask them to talk about the understanding they took from the chapter. Teachers can develop general guiding questions for each discussion which help push students back into the books. These might include their questions, confusions, or wonderings.

Adapted from suggestions provided by Linda Rief, middle school teacher and nationally known educator from Durham, New Hampshire.

Learning From The Experts

Time Needed 30 minutes preparation time: 1 hour for a speaker

Skill Areas
Speaking and Listening

Objective
The reality of homelessness will be emphasized by inviting a homeless person or someone who works at a shelter or local homeless coalition to the classroom. Students will generate questions to ask the guest speaker.

Materials
Paper, pencils

Teacher Preparation
Teacher will contact an advocacy group or shelter to find a guest speaker who is or has been homeless or who knows a lot about the issue. Most local advocacy groups will be able to assist with this request. Check your local phonebook or The National Coalition for the Homeless web site @ http://nch.ari.net for possible groups.

Activity
Each student will write a question or two that they would like to ask the guest speaker. As a group discuss the questions to evaluate the appropriateness and to avoid redundant questions.

Students will ask their questions during the presentation.

Follow Up
Have students write thank you letters to the speaker. The class could also visit a shelter and/or create some kind of donation or volunteer program with that shelter.

Adapted from On the Street Where You Live: Lesson Plans on Homelessness for Middle School Students prepared by the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless, November 1998

"Kids That Care" Kits

Time Needed
2 weeks

Skill Areas
Research, Writing, and Community Involvement

Objective
Students will develop and create "kids that care" kits for homeless people and families. Through this, students will learn about the realities facing homeless people and that one way to help is by offering support through the donation of material goods.

Teacher Preparation
Find a homeless service provider that will accept the donation of the "kids that care" kits and ask for guidance on what items would be particularly helpful.

Activity
Students will brainstorm ideas regarding necessary materials for family well-being. Teacher will list these items on the blackboard. The list might include such items as soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, coats, gloves, scarves, shampoo, small toys, school supplies, etc. Teacher will provide guidance from service provider on what is needed.

Next, students and teacher will design a letter to parents and community members describing their cause and asking for their support by way of donations to help create "kids that care" kits. The letter will describe what materials are needed, and where the materials will be donated. The letter will include the list of items brainstormed earlier in the activity. (A separate letter, written by the teacher, might be sent to the parents as well, notifying them of the project and asking them to assist their child.)

Have students distribute the letters to parents, neighbors, and community businesses. Students and parents will be responsible for bringing items to school. The class can assemble the "kids that care kits" using the materials collected.

Each student can write a letter to include in the kit they assemble. The teacher could help the students write the letter as a large group and have each student make and sign their copy. The letter might look like this:

Dear Friend: I have been learning about homelessness in school. I am sorry that you are homeless at this time. I care about you and am doing what I can to help end homelessness and help you find a place to call home. Your friend, Student's signature

The teacher should arrange a field trip to the homeless service provider so that the students may present the kits in person. Be sure to notify the local press or media of this event using a press release or media advisory.

Adapted from On the Street Where You Live: Lesson Plans on Homelessness for Middle School Students prepared by the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless, November 1998

Letter Writing

Time Needed
One week to gather information; 30 minutes to write letters

Skill Areas
Writing, Reading, and Current Events

Objective
Students will learn about issues of homelessness and be able to express their opinions on the issue to local, state, or national public officials. Through this exercise students will learn that one solution to homelessness may be to advocate for change in governmental policy regarding homelessness.

Materials
Articles from local or national newspapers and/or reports, fact sheets and books on homelessness, poverty, and relevant government policies from the library and Internet. Pencils, paper, envelopes, and names and addresses of local, state, or national officials.

Teacher Preparation
Collect newspaper articles, reports, fact sheets, and books. Please note that there are several web sites with useful information on homelessness; see the Forget Me Not 2000 Selected Resources for Students, Teachers, and Parents for a listing. Find the names and addresses of government officials. If students are writing to U.S. Senators or Representatives, find their names and use the addresses below.

Activity
Have students search local newspapers, magazines, and the library to find articles and reports/books pertaining to homelessness. Students should bring in this information to share with classmates. The teacher should also have resources available for students.

After sharing materials, students will look for common issues and possible solutions to homelessness.

Once common themes and solutions are decided upon, each student will write a letter to a local, state, or national official sharing their concerns and ideas on solutions regarding homelessness in their community.

To a U.S. Senator:
The Honorable (First name/Last name)
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

To a U.S. Representative
The Honorable (First name/Last name)
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Adapted from On the Street Where You Live: Lesson Plans on Homelessness for Middle School Students prepared by the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless, November 1998.